

Corrected Transcript

Interview with **BETTY KING**
Interviewed by Kwame Holman

Betty King was coordinator of special events fundraising in the 1978 Barry campaign. She served as the Mayor's Special Assistant for Boards and Commissions from 1979 until early 1990. In 1994 she chaired the mayoral campaign of John Ray. When Barry defeated Ray in the primary, she volunteered as deputy director of the transition to Barry's fourth administration. She returned to government and served as his deputy chief of staff and as ombudsman handling constituent services until she retired in 1997.

Conducted May 2, 2015

Interview begins:

BETTY KING: Well, I don't know. Politics was my third career. My first career was the theater, New York. And then I went to Africa for almost 9 years. And then I fetched up in Washington in 1972, sort of adrift, not knowing quite what I wanted to do, and it was a presidential year. So I went to work for McGovern in his disastrous defeat.

I then worked for the National Women's Political Caucus and got involved very much in the women's movement of the early '70s, and we founded a chapter of the national caucus, a D.C. Women's Political Caucus.

And I was also involved with a group called the Democratic Forum, which was women's organizations, labor, minorities, who were very interested in the Democratic Party rules, and particularly in the rules for selecting delegates to the 1976 presidential nominating convention. And so I got myself appointed to the D.C. committee that was writing those rules, which was chaired by Bill Lucy from AFSCME [Lucy was International Secretary-Treasurer of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees], you know Bill, and was very much a creature of [DC Mayor] Walter Washington.

Prior to this, delegates to the convention, members of the Democratic State Committee—each state and the District of Columbia has a committee that's part of the apparatus of the national Democratic Party. The elections to those things were sort of negotiated in a dark room somewhere between the elected officials.

Well, the Women's Caucus, and me in particular, we knew that they were going to violate the rules for delegate selection in the District of Columbia, so we started making a big fuss, and we protested to the Democratic National Committee, and we started having meetings in all the wards of the city saying, "You've got to get yourself elected as a delegate," and this just set off a

bomb in the middle of this whole, you know, friendly thing. And so all of the Democrats except for Mayor Walter Washington and Jerry Moore [King misspoke; she meant Councilman Douglas Moore], who was a Council member, all of the other members, Democratic members, of the Council, and Walter Washington, they split, and we ran an election for the Democratic State Committee and for the delegates that was covered by the *Post* and other media as if it were a congressional election. It was remarkable. And the slate that I belonged to, which I think we called ourselves Unity 76, which was everybody but Jerry Moore and Walter Washington, kind of ate the whole thing as far as the Democratic State Committee was concerned, and I became a member of the Executive Committee, and so forth.

So that's where I am when I start working with Marion Barry. I am the publisher and editor of the newsletter of the Democratic State Committee. I am the keeper of an endless number of 3-by-5 index cards with everybody's information on it: who they are, where they live, what their phone is, how they voted, whether they gave money, and to whom, and so forth.

And so in the '74 election, the first election for the City Council, Marion was elected as an at-large member, and since they wanted the terms to be staggered, they drew straws to see whether their first term would be for 2 years or for 4 years. Marion got a short straw. So in '76, he is running for reelection, supposedly for reelection. He was really running for Mayor. And I started helping him then, and particularly in Ward 3, but because of my contacts throughout the city and through the women's movement and being on the Executive Committee of the State Committee, I was an asset, and so I helped him get reelected in '76. But when he went out and talked to people, there was no ambiguity about the fact that he was running for reelection in '76, but he intended in '78 to also be running for Mayor. So that was—

INTERVIEWER: In all of these—I want to talk about Marion Barry, of course—but all of these meetings and your 3-by-5 cards and Jerry Moore and appointed Mayor Walter—

BETTY KING: No, it wasn't—I'm sorry, it wasn't Jerry Moore, it was Doug Moore.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, Douglas Moore.

BETTY KING: Because Jerry Moore was a Republican. I'm sorry. There were two Moores. It was Doug Moore.

INTERVIEWER: That's right. He was like the brown-haired Republican fellow.

BETTY KING: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And the fiery Douglas Moore.

BETTY KING: Right.

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely. But all of you people, all of you folks, were involved in trying to create a representative government, an elective government, where there hadn't been one. These were the rumblings of self-government for Washington.

BETTY KING: Yeah. I was somewhat—I didn't come until '72 and the fight for home rule began long before I got involved in any way, shape, or form, but I did get involved on the run-up to the election, to the adoption of the charter. But I can't claim any really significant role in the whole creation of home rule, but I certainly was in it. After that, I was involved in every single election in one way or another supporting somebody.

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely. But the point is these were the people, you were the people, who were putting together the first bricks and mortar and 2-by-4's of the political elite, the political group, in Washington.

BETTY KING: Well, there had been a political group in Washington, it was just that we sort of—I think the Women's Caucus kind of blew it apart in that they may have been enemies, and certainly coming up to the early elections, and particularly the election of '78, where you had the incumbent Mayor, Walter Washington, the incumbent chairperson of the City Council, Sterling Tucker, and the maverick that nobody thought could possibly win, Marion Barry, vying for the—you know, I think some of that ferment that went on before so that they weren't making deals and saying, "It will be your turn next," you know, that that may have been the catalyst for what happened in '76 and '78, was that it wasn't going to be just a cozy group of friends dividing up the spoils, that there was going to be real, you know, participation and conflict and competition.

INTERVIEWER: So how did that begin to take shape when the short straw, Marion Barry—and one of the questions we're supposed to ask is, when did you first see him, encounter him, meet him, and what was—

BETTY KING: You know I've been trying to remember. I'm sure that I saw him in the early—you know, certainly in '73, '74, '75, and so forth, but it wasn't until this whole, you know, delegate selection, Democratic State Committee election, in the early months of 1976 because we had a primary for delegate selection and the State Committee in the spring, and then there was a primary for the City Council, you know, races in the fall. So it was that spring that I really got to know him.

Now, Sterling Tucker was very much my sponsor in terms of promoting me to be one of the members of the State Committee, but, you know, by that time, I knew all of the Council members, you know, by their first name, and we were—you know, I knew them all, and I was very happy to help Marion get reelected and prepare for '78 in the summer and fall of 1976.

INTERVIEWER: What was your perception of the maverick running, clearly setting himself up in '76 to run in '78?

BETTY KING: Well, you know, I was heavily courted both by Sterling and by Marion, and I'll tell you the difference between their styles. Sterling sent other people to take me out to fancy lunches on K Street, and Marion called me every 10 days personally, never took me out to a meal, but he was always on the phone, you know, "How are you? Have you made up your mind?" and so forth and so on. And I'll tell you, the critical luncheon was with [Sterling supporter] Jason Newman. I don't know if you remember Jason. He was a professor I think at one of the law schools and ran the sort of law clinic, the law students' clinic. And I knew Jason and he asked me to have lunch with him in Chinatown, which I did, and I said, "You know, Jason, Sterling is wooing me, Marion is wooing me. I can't decide who can defeat Walter Washington. I mean, classy guy, ineffective in terms of what I want to—the direction I want to see the city go," and Jason said, "But, Betty, you could make the difference." And I thought about it overnight, and I thought, by god, if I can make a difference, I'm going to go with Marion Barry because that's what I believe in much more than Sterling's much more conservative point of view.

And I didn't immediately sign on because I was a delegate—it was the International Year of the Woman, and I was a delegate to a huge national convention of women in Houston. I was doing a panel for them on women in politics. I was running for election to be vice president of the National Women's Political Caucus, and so I had refused to make my decision known until after November, and, you know, [Marion's deputy campaign manager] Anita Bonds was calling me, Marion was calling me, and so I said, "Listen, just don't talk to me until after Thanksgiving. I will then say." And so I did, you know, as soon as I got back from Thanksgiving, I called Marion and I said, "I'm going with you." And Ivanhoe [Donaldson, Marion's campaign manager] came to see me. I had seen Ivanhoe before, but I didn't really know him. He sat in my living room in Georgetown and he said to me, "This is our strategy. We're going to win Wards 1, 2, 3 and 6. We're not going to disgrace ourselves in 4 and 5. And we're going to do okay in 4 and 5, maybe not win the wards, but we're going to do okay. And we'll try not to be completely swamped in 7 and 8." And that's exactly what happened. This was a year before—well, it was 9 months before the primary, which is all that really matters, and that was his strategy, and that's how it went.

INTERVIEWER: What was your reaction to his saying that? And what do those numbers represent?

BETTY KING: Well, 1, 2, 3, and—3, and to a great extent 2 and—those are the white precincts. A lot of white precincts in 1 and 6. 4 and 5 are more upscale than 7 and 8. Walter Washington had a very strong organization in 7 and 8. But actually, you know, Marion was distinctly targeting the white voters and it was very effective. He gave the same message everywhere, and my feminist friends, when I introduced him, and when they heard him speak more than

once, were very impressed by the fact that he—it wasn't just when he was talking to a group of feminists and women's organizations and so forth that he talked about women's issues, he talked about them all the time. He talked about—I mean, his issues were his issues wherever he went, whether he was in Ward 3 talking to limousine liberals or whether he was in Ward 8 or was in Ward 5, it didn't matter, he was talking about the same vision, and, you know, he was consistent in what he said and what he believed in.

And we organized, God, did we organize. I mean, we really had a fantastic organization everywhere, and we got people to register to vote, we got people who had never—who were registered but rarely voted. They would turn them out and so forth. It was remarkable. I mean, there wasn't a single poll, as far as I know, that was legitimate. I think there may have been one that we concocted, but I don't think that any of the professional pollsters who polled on the mayoral election gave the primary to Marion, I don't think a one did. In fact, I remember sitting outside Marion's office at the head campaign headquarters, and when the pollster from the *Washington Post* came to see him a day or so after the election and said, "How did we get it so wrong?" and Marion said, "You were polling habitual voters, and we got the non-habitual voters to vote and we got new people to register," and that was what made the difference.

But that and the gay community. The gay community contributed hugely in every way, shape, and form, in terms of money, in terms of votes. They essentially ran the telephone bank week after week, month after month. They had the third floor of the campaign headquarters. Richard Lafante and Richard Maulsby, they turned out people who just never stopped dialing those numbers. And then at the end, when we were running short of money, the gay community came through with loans to get us over the hump on election day. So, you know, I've always said that I thought that—I mean, the primary came out one-third, one-third, one-third, except that we had a few thousand votes more than everybody else's third, and I've always said that I thought that that was principally the gay community's unwavering support.

INTERVIEWER: What was it he said and did that caused that to happen with the gay community?

BETTY KING: Because he was the only person who was up front about being supportive of the gay agenda, absolutely. I mean, it was long before, you know, marriage equality and all of that, but, I mean, he—Marion—Marion—

INTERVIEWER: This is 1978. I mean—

BETTY KING: Yeah. Marion came out of the Civil Rights Movement, and as far as he was concerned, women's rights and gay rights and blacks' rights or African American rights were—that was all the same thing, it was civil rights, and he didn't mince his words about it. I mean, nobody was deceived into thinking that he didn't believe that they were all of equal value, and,

you know, and they believed him, and he was a good friend of the women's movement and of the gay community.

INTERVIEWER: Let me go back, Betty, to your being wooed by the Sterling Tucker campaign and K Street restaurant lunches, and Marion taking a different tack and calling you every 10 days. Was it always the 10th day—

BETTY KING: No, no, well, you know, but, I mean, you know.

INTERVIEWER: I got you. He always called. Now, what did you bring? What did Betty King bring to the table to be—was it the women's vote? Was it the white voters in Wards 3 and 1? Why were you so valuable? The 3-by-5 cards?

BETTY KING: All of those, all of the above, all of the above. And because I was indefatigable, I mean, you know, I just never stopped. But all of those things. I mean, I was very much involved with the Democratic Party apparatus in Ward 3, where I lived, and I was very much involved with the women's movement nationally and with the Democratic Party nationally, and I had—I mean, by the time we converted to computers, I must have had—you know those boxes where you—

INTERVIEWER: The boxes, yeah.

BETTY KING: —the metal boxes where you pulled out drawers and so forth, I think I had seven of those. I mean, throughout my service in the Barry administration, those were on my desk, and people would call and say, "What's Kwame's new phone number?" or, "What did so-and-so give to—," you know, I had—I kept the records on who had made contributions and where we could find them and what they had done, and I came into the campaign in 1978 with that under my arm. It was probably only two boxes then, but, you know, later on, it was 7 or 8 or something. But I knew a lot of people and had interacted with a lot of people throughout the city.

So my role in the—I started work in early February, I think, of '78. I actually started work at the campaign headquarters, and my job was to organize a fundraiser for a birthday party for Marion, and his birthday was the 6th of March, the first week in March, so I had a month in which to do it. And I was rather flummoxed because I had never given a party for Marion before. I had given parties, but that was sort of my first biggie, and they said, "Cora will help you," and I said, "Who's Cora?" That was Cora Masters at the time [much later Marion's wife]. And she and I worked together, and I got out my card file and I started calling people, and I got lots and lots and lots of people to sponsor, and I think our goal was—I can't remember, I think our goal was to raise \$5,000, and I raised 10, or it was to raise 10, and I raised 15 or something, and thereafter, I was the person who was the party giver. There were two of us on staff who did fundraising in '78. Ann Kinney did the big bucks and also the art related. We had several

prints that we sold, one by Sam Gilliam and one by Lou Stovall [both prominent DC artists], as fundraisers, and that was Ann's job, and that and the big donors and servicing the Finance Committee. And I was the person who gave every single month from March until the November election—every month I gave a major citywide fundraiser, and every week practically there was some kind of a small fundraiser in every ward in the city. I mean, we raised money by nickels and dimes. It became much easier after the primary, but, I mean, until then, we were raising small amounts of money in comparison to what was—I think what the other campaigns were raising, so—

INTERVIEWER: You talk about your connections to the National Democratic Party, and then Sam Gilliam as an artist, who is well known. People were starting to notice this Marion Barry, starting to notice this majority black city that was for the first time going to be able to express itself politically, and then here's this figure Marion Barry, the former Pride, Incorporated, firebrand kind of thing. What was the feeling about him in Democratic circles, nationally among Democrats, prominent Democrats in the city, about this Marion Barry fellow who you knew in '74 was—in '76, was going to jump and be a force for Mayor?

BETTY KING: Well, I wasn't at all confident. I mean, I hoped, and when Jason said to me, "You could make a difference," that was the direction in which I wanted to make a difference, but I—you know, it wasn't until, I don't know, it was sometime during the summer that Florence Tate [press secretary in the 1978 campaign] and I were sitting. We had desks right outside Marion's little cubbyhole office at the downtown headquarters. And everybody had left for the evening. You had gone off with Marion, and everybody—there was nobody else, at least on our floor, and Florence and I looked at each other and we said, you know, I think we're really going to win this, and from then on we were absolutely confident. I mean, there was no reason to be so confident except that there was a feeling, this was a kind of crusade.

Now, one of my political mentors and closest personal friends was Polly Shackleton, who was a member of the City Council [representing Ward 3], a very good friend of Marion's. She was up for reelection that year. She was unopposed, so she and her husband, Bob, had gone away. I can't remember where they went. I think they may have gone to China or something. I mean, they were *way* away. And she came back at the end of August or sometime in August, and Lee Carty, who was working for Sterling and was very good friends of mine—a very good friend of mine as well, and Peter Hart, I think, who was the pollster, convinced Polly that if she wanted a candidate who was going to beat Walter Washington, she had to go with Sterling. And so then we had the Saturday night massacre when, you know, David Eaton [Pastor of All Souls Unitarian Church] called a meeting because, you know, they were going to try and get Marion to withdraw in favor of Sterling, and then it was canceled at the last moment and they had to cancel the announcement that Polly and others had. I mean, it was in shambles, you know.

[Laughter.]

BETTY KING: And the whole thing was falling apart. But I remember Marion called me and said, "I've got some bad news. I'm sure that Polly is going to endorse Sterling. How do you feel about that? And how is Ward 3 going to feel about it?" And I said, "Well, I'm really sorry about it, but I guess it's time to cut the umbilical cord," that, you know, I'm not going to waver, and none of the other people in Ward 3, devoted as we might have been to Polly, and we all I'm sure voted for her because she got a huge majority. It was—you know, there was a commitment, there was a sense of crusade about that 1978 campaign in the Barry camp. I mean, we were going to do everything right, we were going to work hard, we were going to kill ourselves, and we were just convinced, we knew it was going to happen. You know, we got a little nervous on the night, but, you know, leading up to it we did everything that we possibly could.

But as far as the national party was concerned, they weren't paying that much attention. But, I mean, individual people that I knew who I got to come—you know, who were voters in the District of Columbia were very impressed with Marion. I mean, he was this maverick, you know, sort of street dude, you know, picture of him what—I mean, he was all but dissertation for a Ph.D., for god sakes. He was not—you know he was not a street dude. He lived—you know he could operate in both worlds. And when he was running Pride, Incorporated, I mean, Willard Wirtz [US Secretary of Labor 1962-9] was one of his biggest supporters. I mean, there have been a string of people who were not black and who were not street dudes or dudettes or whatever who had been supporters of Marion Barry, and we had a strong organization here in Ward 3 for him, and, of course, when the *Washington Post* not only endorsed him but followed up with second and third editorials saying why the city should vote for Marion Barry, that carried great weight in the white community, but we already had a significant portion of the white vote even before the *Post* came out so strongly.

INTERVIEWER: So Walter Washington was considered the old guard appointed by Lyndon Johnson to be Mayor of the city. Sterling Tucker, a new face, but still not someone who was perceived as being able to take the city forward fast enough and well enough. But how did it become a crusade? And was that Marion Barry? Was that the electorate wanting something more? Gay rights? Women's rights?

BETTY KING: I think it was all of those things. I think it was all of those things. I mean, Walter Washington was a really nice guy and a classy guy, but he didn't have the—you know, he continued the—those 4 years, you know, everything continued as it was before home rule, kind of. I mean, of course, some people describe it as "home fool," you know, but in those early years, we really felt that we could take control of our lives and our city. But, you know, Marion's vision was to develop the city for the benefit of everybody. And what he did in terms of when he got into the Mayor's office insisting that a certain proportion of every contract let by the city should go to minorities, women, and so forth, I mean, he single-handedly created a black middle class in the District of Columbia. I mean, it was a miracle. You know, it was something that neither Sterling nor Walter I think would have had the vision or the guts to do,

but Marion insisted upon it. He insisted that the people who worked in the District of Columbia government live in the District of Columbia. Of course, he had to grandfather in the civil servants who, you know, had been living in Prince George's County or Montgomery County or Virginia, but under his administration, if you were hired for the District, to work in the District government, you lived in the District of Columbia. I mean, the fact that we are so held hostage by Maryland and Virginia, you know, there are suburbs, and yet we can't have a nonresident income tax and so forth because of their power in the Congress. And Marion had clever strategies for helping to correct that imbalance to the extent that he could under existing law, and by insisting that contractors, if they weren't minorities or women, that they must involve minorities and women, and, you know, Latinos and blacks and so forth in their programs.

INTERVIEWER: You said you and Florence had that moment sitting outside after everyone had gone home from the campaign office when you thought it really could happen, the endorsements from the *Washington Post* came along, but still it was touch and go, neck and neck on election night, but then it did happen. What was that like?

BETTY KING: Oh.

[Laughter.]

BETTY KING: The election night party was at the Harambee House.

INTERVIEWER: On Georgia Avenue.

BETTY KING: On Georgia Avenue, yeah, which belonged at that time—didn't it belong to Howard University? I think it did. I don't know what it is now, but it was the first hotel, you know. Oh, it was great. We had used it for at least one of the fundraisers that I organized we had had there, and that was where we were going to be on election night. And the news came out very quickly that we were leading in the polls. And when Marion and Effi came into the room and called their staff up on the platform with them, we had to elbow our way through people we had never seen before.

[Laughter.]

BETTY KING: And I remember Max Berry [chair of the campaign's finance committee] sitting on the floor in the hall saying, "Betty, are you sure we won? Did we really win?" I mean, it was very small. But, you know, we didn't stop for a moment. We didn't stop for a moment in turning out people at the polls, getting people driven to the polls. We pulled every single vote we were entitled to. And nobody in the Barry campaign was too grand to do anything, whereas it was my observation that Sterling's campaign and Walter Washington's campaign had a lot of chiefs and very few Indians. We were just all Indians. Nobody was too proud to do whatever needed to be done in order to win another vote, and I think that was critical for the campaign.

INTERVIEWER: There's that famous moment in movie making and I guess the Robert Redford film *The Candidate* where they come from behind and win, and they say, "Oh, my god—

BETTY KING: "What are we going to do now?"

INTERVIEWER: —what are we going to do now?"

BETTY KING: There was never any question. We knew exactly what we were going to do. I mean, we transitioned, you know—first we had to win the general election, but that was—really the transition planning started after the—you know, 10 days after the primary when we were declared to be the primary winners and so forth. No, there was a plan, and a lot of people were involved. That was part of the trademark of Marion's transitions, was that he—it wasn't a close group of advisers sitting in a small room, you know. He involved a lot of people at all levels in deciding what the priorities were, and so it was not a—we did not go into office in January of '79 with any kind of timid agenda, you know, or, you know. There was a plan and there was a vision, and we were going to follow that vision because that's what we had worked for.

INTERVIEWER: And by this time, the national spotlight was starting to turn. They had noticed Marion Barry, the storyline of former SNCC firebrand, Pride, Incorporated, women, gays, et cetera, is elected Mayor of Washington, D.C.

BETTY KING: Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: How did he handle that when you observed him?

BETTY KING: You're probably in a better position to have observed that yourself because you were probably setting up those interviews. I was—you know, as far as I could see, he handled it with style and grace and, you know, it didn't seem to me that it really went to his head or that he became entranced, but, you know, I wasn't that involved.

One of the things I had also done before I became involved with Marion was that I had headed up an organization called the Coalition for Women's Appointments, which had been looking at the appointments, the patronage appointments, some paid, some voluntary, for the Boards and Commissions in the District of Columbia, and so that was what I wanted to do in the Barry administration, and that was what I was tasked to set up. And Valerie Barry and I were co-directors of—both of us coming out of the Women's Caucus, were co-directors of that office, and we had a lot of work to do to set that up.

Also, because Marion's election left a vacancy on the City Council, an at-large seat on the City Council, there were a number of us who were members of the Democratic State Committee,

and an at-large vacancy on the Council is filled by the party committee that that person represented. So, in other words, the Democratic State Committee was going to vote to replace Marion on the City Council. And there were several of us—Anita Bonds, myself, Kay McGrath, I can't remember who else—who couldn't come into the administration on inaugural day, we had to stay out of the administration so we could continue to vote because we had promised John Ray that we would get him elected to fill, you know, I think what it's like 3 months before the special election. It was quite a night because there were lots of candidates, and we were just determined. It went to 13 ballots. We were there half the night, but finally we were able to get John Ray appointed, and then he subsequently won it in the special election. And so it wasn't until after that that I actually moved into the District Building. But, no, I think—I mean, Marion had a plan and he had an excellent group of people on his transition, and he made some brilliant choices in his first Cabinet, and everybody was—a lot of the people in the first Cabinet were—had been part either of the campaign or of the strategy during the transition and so forth. So, you know, we were just off and running.

INTERVIEWER: Just to fill it out on John Ray, John Ray had been a potential problem for the campaign and had been taking away votes.

BETTY KING: Well, you know, there—in addition to Marion, Walter, and Sterling, John Ray and Dorothy Maulsby were running. You know, they didn't have a chance. But when Dorothy endorsed I think Walter Washington, we decided we had to get John Ray. And so he endorsed Marion, and he moved into the same open space office with Florence Tate, myself, Mary Lampson [former chief of staff to Councilwoman Shackleton], and the "baby brigade." That was another feature of the campaign. I'm sure you remember. There were a number of teens and preteens who came to the office every day, they ran errands, they circulated petitions, they did whatever they were asked to do. They were dedicated. And some of them—I mean, Norm Nixon, who was one of them, went on to become the chair of the Democratic Party and had been a power in Democratic politics. [King is wrong about Nixon and the Democratic Party; that was another Barry supporter]. He's now, I think, a grandfather by now. But those were the people who were on the second floor just outside of Marion's little cubbyhole. And so John came and joined us and he really worked for the campaign, and particularly amongst lawyers and the people who had supported him. But, you know, neither he nor Dorothy were a real threat, but you just want to clear the board. You know?

INTERVIEWER: And then John needed to be endorsed then by you, Barry operatives, if you will, on the Democratic State Committee.

BETTY KING: Yeah. Right. Yeah. You know, because if we had gone into the—if we had left the transition and gone into the government, we would have been barred from voting, and we needed every vote we could get. Thirteen ballots, it was a lot of ballots.

[Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: And you talked, Betty, about the "baby brigade." Just another slice of—you had young people of all colors, and some very young people of all colors, and gays, and young blacks, and professionals, and—

BETTY KING: Artists.

INTERVIEWER: —young lawyers from John Ray's ilk, and older white voters, and some revolutionaries, and—

BETTY KING: Yeah, we had everything. We had a very, very diverse constituency, very diverse, and Marion always did. I mean, as time went on, he—you know, it changed somewhat. You know, later on, he could count on Wards 7 and 8 and not so much on Wards, you know, 1 and 3. But he always had a very diverse group of supporters, but particularly in that first—the first mayoral campaign. It was all the colors of the rainbow.

INTERVIEWER: Exciting time. And you talk about the people who came into the Cabinet. I remember there was some consternation that he was going too national, I mean bring in Elijah [Rogers, Barry's first City Administrator] and even Judith Rogers [Barry's first Corporation Counsel, later an appeal court judge], who was sort of from here, but he almost created a national kind of Cabinet.

BETTY KING: Well, you know, there were Jim Gibson and Carroll Harvey and Courtland Cox and Ivanhoe and so forth. It was not nearly as much of a national recruiting effort as subsequent Mayors have followed, I believe. You know, I haven't done the statistics on it, but I think that it wasn't—Elijah was definitely, you know, somebody who was new to us, but I think that many of the other people had been, you know—they were Washingtonians or were known to Washingtonians and so forth. There were some outliers, but, you know, it was definitely a—it was a group of people who—you know, we had to train ourselves to stop calling him Marion and call him Mr. Mayor, and we knew each other, so that there was a bond of trust already established between most of the people who came in with him.

And, of course, there was this odd situation which was that as a holdover from the pre-home rule days, there were certain positions, like the City Administrator, who had—was a tenured position, it wasn't, you know. Marion created a whole sort of what in the Federal Government they call Schedule C. In other words, people who serve at the pleasure of the Mayor, there were precious few of those when we came into office. All of the department heads were essentially tenured civil servants, and, you know, whereas 4 years later when Marion won reelection for his second term, those of us who served at the pleasure of the Mayor were asked to hand in letters of resignation, which, you know, my letter of resignations say, "I reluctantly resign, and I'll be very upset if you don't reappoint me," except in business language. And I was reappointed.

But, you know, the Mayor had the prerogative to sack a lot of us at any—you know, at any point, but not when he came in. There were some very delicate maneuvers to create space. And in the meantime, he appointed deputy mayors who were going to oversee different parts of the government because he didn't have the visibility to bring in, as now I'm sure [current DC Mayor Muriel] Bowser has the ability to bring in all new department directors, City Administrator, the law, but not in January 1979.

INTERVIEWER: I want to go back to that meeting you had with Ivanhoe in which he laid out what was going to happen in the election a year later. This Ivanhoe Donaldson, how critical was he to that campaign succeeding and then the role in the first year?

BETTY KING: Oh, absolutely essential, absolutely essential. He was the best. He was Marion's closest friend, closest adviser, mentor, friend, you know, absolutely loyal. He was also—there's hardly one of us who doesn't have scars on our backs from Ivanhoe walking roughshod over us, and sometimes he rode—you know, he walked on Marion, too, you know, ran, rode roughshod over him. But, you know, he's a brilliant strategist. And I think that he was a very good influence on Marion and was a very good friend to him, and certainly he was a brilliant—you know, I mean, to sit there in my living room and outline exactly what happened, you know, he had a plan, and the plan was implemented. There were times when I remember I was trying to get him to approve something, it was for a big—I had, you know, just a few weeks to put together a big citywide fundraising event, I can't remember if it was a dance or a disco or something that was—and I had to get the stuff to the printer and so forth, and he didn't want to talk to me, and I remember he was running down the stairs from the second floor to the first floor, and I said—and I was standing at the top, and I shrieked out at him, "Fuck you, Ivanhoe Donaldson!" and he stopped dead. I think he didn't think that nice lady from Ward 3 had a vocabulary like that, so he docilely came back. I asked the question, he gave me the answer, took him 30 seconds, and he left. But, you know, he was very in charge kind of guy, and that was very welcome much of the time, but there were times when he really was unnecessarily unpleasant to people. But I don't know anybody who hasn't forgiven him that because, you know, he got results. But we've all been there.

[Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: And so they both succeeded in running the government and setting up the kinds of things, as you talk about, having to go around the legacy of tenure for department people and so forth and being able to figure things out. They figured out the government in that first year.

BETTY KING: Yes. I mean, you know, it had to be transitioned. It wasn't revolutionary and it wasn't that we blew things up when we came in, but over the next couple of years, people who, you know, needed to be replaced would take early retirement or another job would—I mean,

there was a certain—it wasn't—it was implacable, but it wasn't ruthless. I mean, you know, there—civil servants, you know, under the law have certain rights, and, therefore, you can't mess around too much with that, but you've got to—you know, at the same time, you've got to be able—a Mayor has to be able to have his own team, and to have inherited Walter Washington's team and not be able to replace them was a setback. But, you know, it took a while and he was able to reshape the government and the personnel in various departments in order, you know, to have the outcome that he needed.